

**Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel – 12 November 2019**  
**Draft Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy**  
**2020-2021 to 2023-2024 Report**  
**Minute Extract**

The Finance Business Partner presented the budget report and explained the changes made to the content in response to feedback during the consultation period. The Panel were invited to comment on the budget proposals relevant to its remit. The Panel were advised that comments on the proposals would be added to a report to be considered by Scrutiny Board before being presented to Cabinet.

The Finance Business Partner advised the Panel that an extra £6.2 million had been added to the adult social care budget to address budget pressures. The Director of Adult Services outlined the range of budget pressures and challenges that the service had faced, such as meeting the commitment to the National Living Wage, which had proven to be more difficult to achieve than originally expected.

The Director of Adult Services commented on the five core principles that supported the workstreams aimed at supporting the achievement of the priorities detailed in the Our Council Plan 2019-24, which related to adult social care. The Director of Adult Services added that he wanted to avoid following a 'salami slicing' approach to meeting savings targets and instead the focus had been on introducing different models for transforming the service. The changes were aimed at achieving a better balance between the quality of service offered and meeting budget savings targets. The following were given as examples, Transforming Adult Social Care Programme, the Better Care Programme and work done as part of Sustainable Transformation Programme (STP), which is a partnership of health and care services working across the Black Country.

The Panel were advised that the STP was looking at delivering more cost-effective joint commissioning of services, which sometimes were better done at a Black Country level rather than each authority providing their own local service, which could be difficult and also more costly due to the small numbers.

The Panel queried the lack of detail in the proposed restructure of the Commissioning Team and would have liked to have seen information about the current and proposed new structure to allow more informed comment. The Director of Adult Services advised that details about the changes to the structure were currently part of discussions with employees and trade unions, so he was not able to comment in a public meeting or provide more details in the report at the current stage. The Panel queried the expected impact on the service of meeting the savings target of £300,000 and whether this would involve the deletion of specific posts. The Director of Adult Services advised that no decision had been made yet and some of the savings could be achieved through the process of voluntary redundancies and the deletion of vacant posts to achieve the savings target.

The Panel queried the reference to the core principles and specifically the idea of unlocking capacity within communities to provide an effective and supportive

environment. The Panel were concerned about the reduced capacity with the voluntary sector due to previous funding reductions and the extent to which this aim was achievable in the current circumstances. The Panel added that the number of community groups needed practical financial support ranging from getting help with venue and refreshments costs, to continue providing a service.

The Director of Adult Services advised that the majority of the adult services budget was spent on meeting statutory needs where people have been assessed under nationally set eligibility criteria. This presented a challenge to the Council in meeting those needs and demands for funding where there was no statutory responsibility. The Director of Adult Services accepted that the voluntary sector needed extra financial support and there was a commitment to work constructively, while continuing to manage budget pressures on the service.

The Panel discussed the proposals listed in the papers linked to aim of transforming adult social care. The Panel queried the options being considered as part of the review of Blakenhall dementia day service provision and expressed concern about reducing funding in this area. The Director of Adult Services advised the Panel that no detailed decisions had been made yet, but there were discussions ongoing to look at how current services were delivered.

The Panel were reassured that the savings proposals did not affect the provision of the day services at Blakenhall. A number of different models of best practice were being considered for the provision of meals. The Director of Adult Services advised that the final budget proposals would be presented to Cabinet on 19 February 2020. The Panel discussed the idea of considering the outline budget proposals presented at a future meeting when more detail would be available to assess them against Council's priorities and their likely impact on the service. The Director of Adult Services commented that the transformation programme was looking at different ways of supporting people, for example, supporting a person into employment as an alternative to visiting the local day centres. Many of the current adult care services were based on ideas developed in the 1980s and as demand changed, the offer also needed to change.

The Panel queried current progress on completing a more detailed assessment of the equalities and health implications of the budget savings proposals. The Director of Adult Services advised that a full equalities impact assessment would need to be done. An initial assessment on the proposals had been done.

**Resolved:**

1. The Panel comments on the budget proposals to be included in the feedback to Scrutiny Board before it is presented to Cabinet.
2. The Panel agree that the Chair and Vice Chair approve the final response that is sent to Scrutiny Board.
3. The Panel agree to add to the work programme, reports on the budget proposals when further details became available to consider their impact and to make recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.